

## **Tips for Visiting with a Person with Memory Loss**

### **General Guidelines**

Learn about Alzheimer's Disease – it will help you to understand what the person is experiencing and to not take changes in how they relate to you personally

Approach – friendly, smiling, approach the person from the front

Get to their level – if they are seated, be seated

Make eye contact

Introduce yourself

Use their name

Touch – get permission before you touch – arm, hand, shoulder, rub hand lotion into their hands

Keep it simple and be willing to be flexible – what worked in the past may no longer work

Use simple sentences and if asking questions, only one at a time

Speak clearly

If they ask repetitive questions, try to answer the question as if it were the first time they asked you – for them it is the first time. You can also distract them to another subject.

Don't argue with or correct the person, try not to ask if they remember

Find a quiet, comfortable place – too many people, too much activity/noise can be overwhelming.

Have fun – keep a playful, fun-loving attitude

Give them a card with a short message and your name

If they are able to speak, take the time to listen to them. It may take them some time to say what they want to say and you may need to be creative in understanding them. If they seem distressed, empathize with them (even if you cannot understand the words)

If the person becomes agitated, stop what you are doing and change the activity or subject or simply sit quietly with them.

Even though the person may not remember that you have visited with them, you have created a place of belonging and joy for them in the time that you were with them. It is the present moment that is important.

## Things to Do Together when You Visit

Reminisce - Talk about old times if you have shared memories, first car, favorite pet, school days, their wedding day

Read Scripture or together say a familiar passage of scripture – Psalm 23, the Lord's Prayer, liturgy

Sing a hymn together – depending on their ability you can sing from a hymnal or it may be as simple as Jesus Loves Me. If they are not able to sing and you are not comfortable singing, you can take along music to play for them and listen to it together.

Pray together – ask them to pray if they are able to do so

Celebrate religious traditions together – liturgy, communion

Go for a walk together. Take them for a ride in the wheelchair if they are unable to walk.

Do a puzzle together – perhaps only 10-35 pieces

Take a pet along if you know that they enjoy animals

Adult Coloring – with pencils or crayons

Use their photos to talk about family members or photos of friends (church directory)

Play a card game, dominoes, checkers

Read a story – Reader's digest, Guideposts, children's book

In the summer – snap green beans, hull peas, husk corn

Fold laundry, towels, dish towels

Sort objects by shape or color

Take flowers and arrange them together or for them as they watch

Finish familiar sayings – the pledge of allegiance, barking up the wrong ... he has a chip on his ....a fool and his money... they are a dime a ....money doesn't grow on ...

Sand wood

Roll yarn into a ball, cut quilt patches, make a Linus blanket together

If they are able to read, bring them a book – from the library

If the person brings up a person who is no longer living, rather than telling them the person has died, ask them to talk about the person.

Go for a drive.

Some ideas adapted from the Alzheimer's Association website and author Marie Marley